



President and Chief Executive Officer
Brooklyn Botanic Garden
Brooklyn, NY

THE SEARCH

Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG or the Garden) seeks a strategic, visionary, and operational leader to serve as its next president and chief executive officer (president). Situated on 52 acres of intensively planted landscapes and specialty gardens, BBG is renowned as an intimate oasis in one of the country's most densely populous regions. By virtue of its context and programmatic investment in community greening, free and low-cost education programs, and cultural programming, BBG is known as the country's foremost *urban* garden.

The Garden features more than a dozen distinct landscapes, a glass Conservatory complex, and more than 10,000 taxa of plants. It also maintains an historic archive in the Library program, as well as an Herbarium (dried plant specimen) collection with more than 300,000 records. Originally designed in 1910 by the Olmsted Brothers, the Garden has more recently been refined by distinguished landscape and building architects to diversify its horticultural experiences and create a more welcoming environment for all. With steadily increasing attendance and participation, BBG now welcomes nearly 900,000 visitors a year, including 24,000 member households. A committed staff of 165 manages the Garden.

The next president will refine and execute a recently developed strategic plan while helping finalize a long-term master site plan called the "Greenprint for the Future." With skillful organizational management, they will lead staff through a series of strategies and tasks tied to those plans, driving deep understanding of the process and desired outcomes. As a visible leader of an internationally renowned and locally beloved cultural institution, BBG's next president must excel not only at management but also as a financial builder by driving earned revenues, growing the endowment, and, eventually, carrying out a capital campaign. BBG serves as a member of the New York City Cultural Institutions Group; its president connects with municipal and private donors and maintains relationships with other botanic gardens.

BBG's president must embody the Garden's ethos and values and continue to promote it as a civically oriented, beautiful botanic haven in service to its communities.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden has retained Isaacson, Miller, an executive search firm, to assist with this recruitment. Inquiries, nominations, and applications, in the form of a CV and cover letter, should be sent in strict confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

The president provides leadership, vision, and operational management of Brooklyn Botanic Garden, straddling horticulture and conservation, education and engagement, and fundraising and visibility. As a champion for plants and their unique role in creating sustainable cities, and a proponent of ecological education and science, the new president will elevate BBG's already-recognized role as a leader in its field.

Reporting to the approximately 35-member Board of Trustees, the president oversees an annual operating budget of \$32 million and an endowment of over \$130 million as of December 2025. They lead a staff of 165 full-time employees (both union and non-union) and seasonal part-time employees. The eight staff reporting to the president include: the chief development officer, the chief financial officer & vice president of finance, the chief public affairs officer & vice president of marketing and business development, the vice president of education and interpretation, the vice president of horticulture, the vice president of planning, design, and facilities, the vice president of visitor services and public safety, and an executive assistant.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Building upon a strong foundation, the president will address the following challenges and use them to propel the Garden forward with clarity and vision.

Lead with a strategic vision

Having completed a recent strategic plan and a master site plan, the president will use this to transparently and collaboratively set and communicate a clear vision, one that unifies its dedicated team, defines how BBG will contribute to the world, and how it will use applied science to fulfill its mission and engage the community. The president will understand the Garden's impact and responsibility; it is a large organization with a national reach, but it also holds a special place locally in Brooklyn. The president should have a deep understanding of the history of BBG, the world of public gardens in general, and a deep love of natural beauty, including curated horticultural collections, display and theme gardens, and landscape architecture.

Manage and support garden staff

The BBG's professional staff is vital to the operation and success of the Garden. The president will coalesce, build, and mentor the diverse teams. They will communicate across all levels and promote a

collegial, supportive, transparent, and respectful climate where the team can achieve institutional goals guided by clear direction and measurable outcomes. They will assess staff structures and systems and promote creative collaboration. The president will also be a seasoned leader and manager who will promote best practices in the field, set staff expectations, and hold them to account with qualitative and quantitative measurements.

Strengthen financial and operational resources

The Garden is financially healthy and continues to have a balanced budget. On this solid foundation, the next president will focus on growing the Garden's earned revenues, endowment, and public funding from the City and state. The City is the Garden's landlord and provides 17% of annual operating support; as such, the president will be engaged in fundraising from the City in line with its government affairs team.

The president ensures that staff and visitors experience BBG as an administratively streamlined and welcoming operation. They will manage the day-to-day operations of the Garden and have the managerial expertise and acumen to build an effective team. The president will seek to better operational processes, infrastructure, and technology where necessary. As needed, the president will be a skilled change management leader.

Augment philanthropic support

The president will have a track record of leading successful fundraising initiatives and a strong ability to grow contributed revenue, emphasizing people and relationships. The next president will partner with the experienced chief development officer on all fundraising, using effective storytelling and public speaking skills to inspire new, renewed, and increased giving from institutional and individual funders. The Garden's relationship with Brooklyn is critical, and the next leader will leverage the Garden's deep existing ties while also building new ones. The president will eventually oversee a feasibility study and subsequent capital campaign for the future of the Garden.

Represent BBG externally

The president is the representative of the Garden, and an ambassador to supporters and the broader garden community, which includes the city, professional associations, other botanic gardens and cultural institutions, volunteers and guests. They will increase awareness, engagement, and visibility for BBG as a speaker who can navigate press and PR opportunities.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will possess many, if not all, of the following qualifications, skills, and experience:

- Strategic non-profit leadership with experience leading an organization of similar complexity and significance to strengthen its level of influence in its respective communities;
- Deep passion for the mission of BBG and gardens more broadly;
- Varied cross-sector experience to bring the perspectives needed for effective problem-solving;

- Enthusiastic fundraiser, ideally with successful capital campaign experience;
- Curious leader who engages with challenges, utilizes data, and makes difficult decisions;
- Demonstrated history of strong collaboration with a Board of Trustees;
- Familiarity with a unionized workforce;
- Exceptional communication skills (both verbal and written), including the ability to actively listen to, connect with, and inspire;
- Experience in building collaborative relationships with other cultural institutions and government entities locally, nationally, and globally;
- Developed and inclusively implemented an impactful long-term institutional vision;
- Advanced a culture of trust, transparency, collaboration, talent development, accountability, and cohesion;
- Strengthened operating processes and systems, resulting in operational viability and sustainability;
- An innovator willing to take a calculated risk;
- Strong emotional intelligence; indefatigable, bold, and an effective advocate;
- Credibility, passion, and savvy to champion science;
- An advanced degree in a related field, such as botany, management, public policy, or government affairs, is welcome;
- A desire and ability to embrace the Brooklyn community.

COMPENSATION

The anticipated compensation for this position is \$350,000 - \$425,000 annually, commensurate with the successful candidate's experience. The president is expected to have a regular presence at the Garden, ensuring visibility and accessibility with both staff and the community. Periodic travel for conferences, events, and network building is expected.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search.

Sarah James, Jackie Mildner, Jonathan Sanchez, and Pamela Carty
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/brooklyn-botanic-garden/president-and-chief-executive-officer>

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